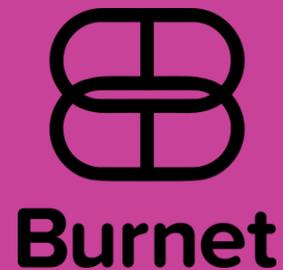# Public amenity and the North Richmond medically supervised injecting room

Exploring the perspectives of residents through critical urban theory

Bianca Whiteside

* No conflicts to declare

(VACCA 2025)

Aim: To explore residents' experiences and attitudes toward drug-related and general public amenity

Reduce overdose harms and deaths

Gateway to health and social services

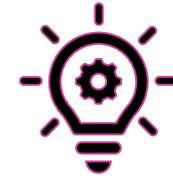Reduce emergency service attendance due to overdose

Assist in reducing the spread of BBV

Reduce number of discarded needle/syringe and public injecting in the area
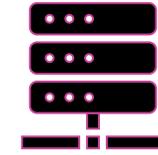
Improve public amenity of the neighbourhood

(Victorian State Government 2020;2023)

Method: Qualitative semi-structured interviews

500m circumference from MSIR

recruitment

- 500m radius from MSIR
- Multi-lingual flyer
- Reimbursed $40 voucher

interviews

- Participants n=41
- Translator 7%
- Public housing 22%
- Online 56%
- Avg. 43 mins

coding

- Neale's iterative categorisation (Neale 1998)
- NVIVO (v.15)
- Critical urban theory (Brenner 2010)

themes

- Feelings of (un)safe – right to the city
- In place/out of place

Burnet

DEAKIN UNIVERSITY

What's it like living in North Richmond?

Burnet   DEAKIN UNIVERSITY   INSTITUTE FOR HEALTH TRANSFORMATION

Are you a North Richmond resident, have lived in the area for over 2 years, and are over 18 years old?

We would love to speak to you about how you live, work, and play in the community.

We invite you to attend a 30 minute interview that can take place either in-person or online. Your responses will be confidential and could have an impact how important decisions are made in your neighbourhood.

If you wish to participate, please scan the QR in your preferred language.

As a thank you, you'll receive a $40 Coles gift card.

English   Tiếng Việt   客家話   普通话

Analysis: Critical Urban Theory

Power, governance , belonging and exclusion

Urban space is not neutral or fixed

How things are and how they could be

Space is socially produced and politically charged

Henri Lefebvre
The right to the city (1968)
Production of space (1974)

Space is lived, felt and experienced throughout the body

Tim Cresswell
In place and out of place (1992)

Cameron Duff
Affective right to the city (2017)

General, drug-related public amenity and space

Public amenity = the **material** and **spatial** features of a community that **supports** everyday life. (*in review* Whiteside et al 2025)
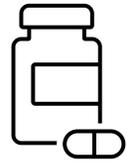
Drug-related public amenity = **measurable** indicators of **public drug use** and **publicly discarded drug-related litter** that affect the **cleanliness, safety, and accessibility** of shared space. (*in review* Whiteside et al 2025)
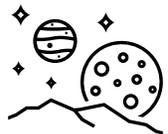
Space = the **physical landscape** and the **social, political and moral** relationships that shape how these environments are **governed, inhabited, and experienced** (Lefebvre 2014)
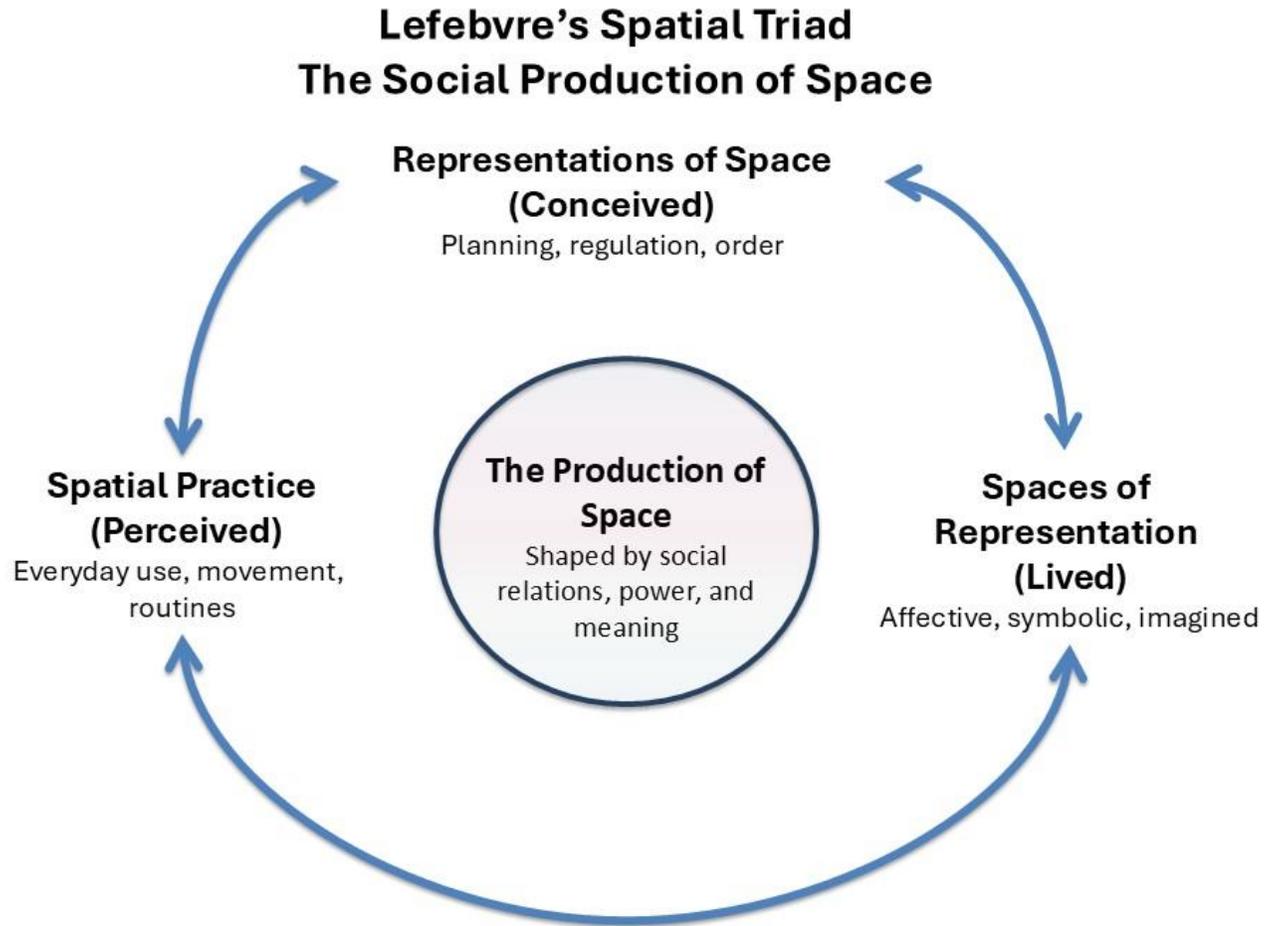
Theme 1: Feeling (un)safe – affective dimensions of public amenity and the right to the city

"I should have the right to use it [public space] safely and have it not effect my physical and mental health." (R15)

" I have to watch every ten people that are on God knows what to get to a maternal health appointment. So, you're just bringing a whole lot of people together who it's, to me, it's just, it's unsatisfactory, really." (R42)

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Lefebvre's Spatial Triad
The Social Production of Space

Representations of Space (Conceived)
Planning, regulation, order

Spatial Practice (Perceived)
Everyday use, movement, routines

The Production of Space
Shaped by social relations, power, and meaning

Spaces of Representation (Lived)
Affective, symbolic, imagined

Figure 1. *Lefebvre's Spatial Triad: The Social Production of Space* (adapted from Lefebvre, 1991)

Feelings of safety overriding issue of public amenity

International research indicates no increase in attributable crime around SIFs (Levengood, Yoon et al. 2021)

No increase in reported crime post-implementation (Victorian State Government 2020)
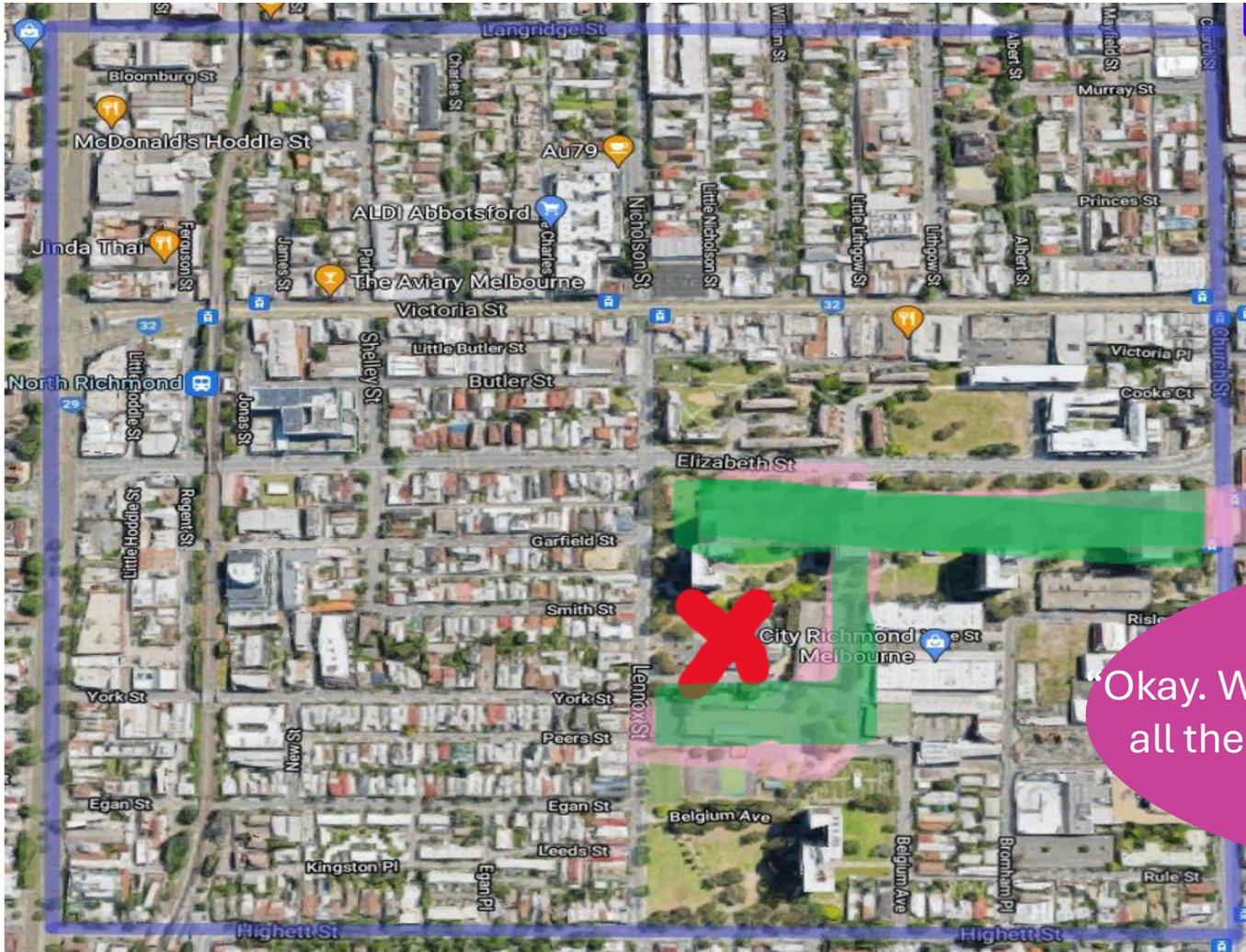
Affective atmospheres - moods or feelings that emerge in particular spaces (Duff 2017)

Space produced through lived experience and embodied perception (Lefebvre 2014)

Media discourse often stigmatising = us and them binary (e.g. Whiteside and Dunn 2022; Atkinson, McAuley et al. 2019; Sumnall, Holland et al. 2025)

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"…*you making it next to the school, next to the clinic, next to the five tower of the people who live in here. There's no good place.*" (R10)

"Okay. Write it down. Relocate the injecting room and then all the problems would be gone. All our problems. The community's." (R14)

Theme 2: In place or out of place – locating the MSIR
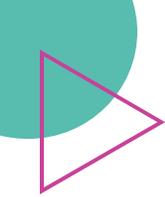

"Ground zero" – MSIR has the power

Recency bias – socialisations and behaviours v people dying from overdose

Spatial injustice (Iveson 2011) – unequal balance of social burden and benefit

Emotional and affective bond with place – Lived Space (Lefebvre 1968)

MSIR coded as "immoral" (Cresswell 1992) - Spatial container for stigma

In place, but not this place – akin to NIMBYism

Disrupting and reconstructing

Reimage the space for all of community
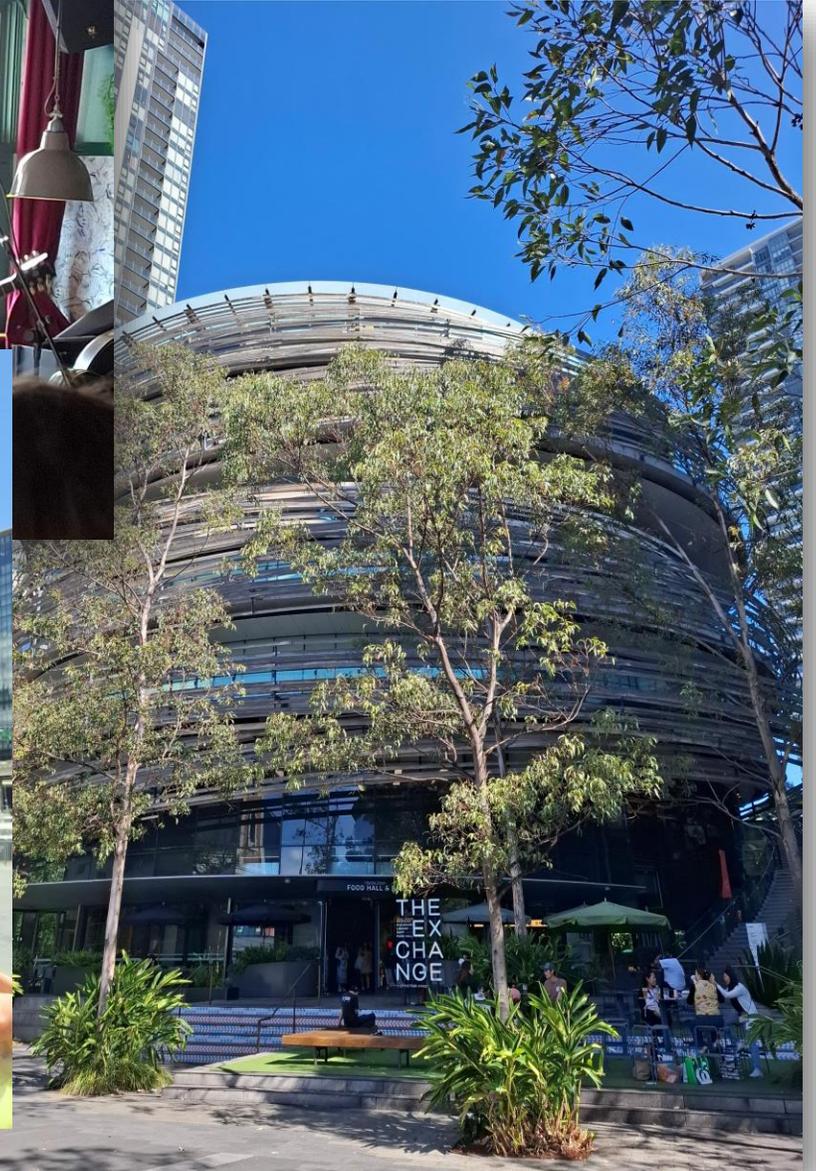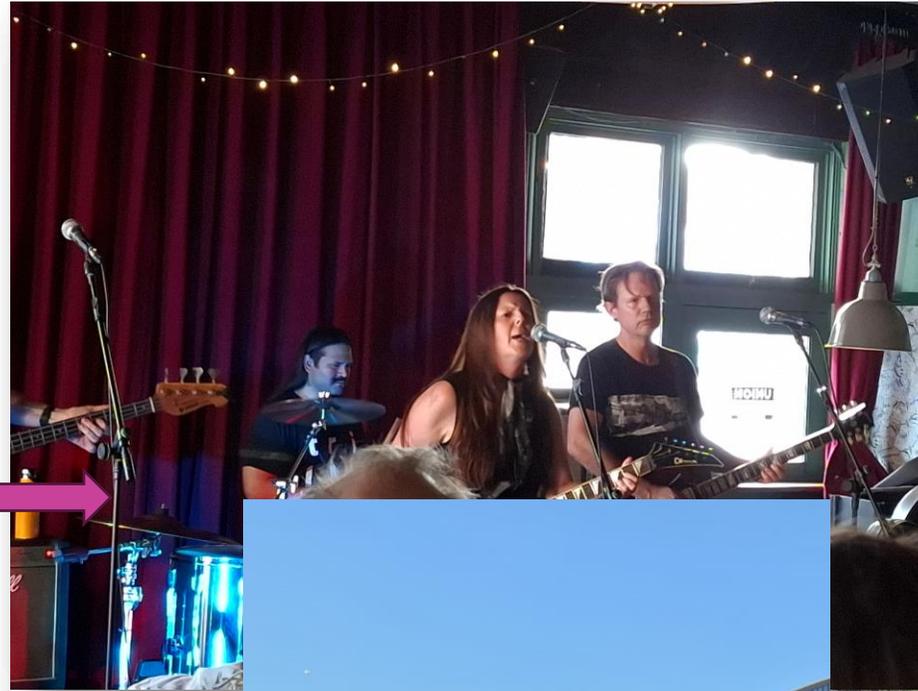
Disrupt the us and them binary

Reconstruct places of inclusion and cohesion

Acknowledge

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Thank you, Sydney!

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